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SUPPLEMENTCAMBODIA

In the wake of recent increased antigovernment activity in Cambodia, Chief of State Sihanouk appears to be taking strong measures to reassert his control over the government.

In a speech on 3 April denouncing armed attacks on government installations by "pro-Communist" elements in western Cambodia, Sihanouk said he was prepared, if necessary, to call for a "suspension of the functions" of the National Assembly and of the government of Premier Lon Nol. Sihanouk's proposals indicate that he is genuinely concerned over the armed agitation and the erosion of his own prestige.

Although little hard information is available on the rebel activity, it appears that leftist elements in Phnom Penh, supported by Communists there, provided the main impetus for the dissident activity.

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While moving to contain the leftist agitation, Sihanouk is evidently trying to maintain a balance between leftist and moderate forces. Despite his threats to suspend the government, he has thus far resisted leftist pressure for the ouster of Premier Lon Nol and instead has removed two moderate cabinet ministers. One of the replacements has had connections with leftist elements. Should dissident activity persist or increase, however, Sihanouk might still take over direct personal control of the government.

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